

people that are unemployed by helping not only the wage earner but also the wage payer, or is it more cynical to offer a stimulus bill that does nothing for the people that you want folks to be hired back by?

And we have been accused of blocking today, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am new to Washington and I am from south of Highway 40, but it seems to me this is the third time we have passed a stimulus bill with benefits for the unemployed in it and it has been blocked, Mr. Speaker, somewhere else. And only in Washington, D.C. would you be accused of having tried thrice to accomplish something and now you are blocking it.

Should we do more? We have been accused by the gentleman from Texas. Well, we are. We are offering not just 13 weeks but we are triggering additional unemployment benefits and vouchers to pay 60 percent of the cost of health insurance coverage. And this business of using laid-off workers as pawns, who uses the hurting family as a pawn, the one who labors to meet their need for assistance today and a job tomorrow, or the person content with accepting uncompromising obstruction that does nothing to help the plight of the unemployed today?

I urge passage of the rule and this measure.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE).

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, the laid-off workers of America are waiting and waiting and waiting. They are waiting for help they need and have been promised time and time again. But it looks as if they will once again be held hostage by the majority leadership's decision to attach their economic agenda to a worker-relief bill.

In October we were promised, and displaced workers were promised, an assistance package as soon as Congress passed a bill to help the airline industry. Airlines got help; displaced workers did not. Broken promise.

In December we were promised, and displaced workers were promised, they would receive help. It did not happen. Broken promise. Even the President wants this Congress to pass a stand-alone worker-relief bill instead of continuing to play stimulus politics. I have here a chart that shows part of a letter from the President of the United States to me on December 11 on which he called on Congress to send him a stand-alone worker-relief bill regardless of the success or failure of any other elements of the economic stimulus measures now pending.

The last week the Senate passed worker-relief legislation; but instead of fulfilling the promise to displaced workers, House is still trying to get a so-called stimulus package and displaced workers are the victims once again. Broken promise.

Who are these displaced workers? These are people who just need assistance. They lost their jobs through no

fault of their own because of the recession or because of September 11. They were taxpayers before, and they will be taxpayers again just as soon as they find a job. But they need to be able to survive until they find that next job. 300,000 workers ran out of unemployment benefits in December. More ran out in January, and each month more will run out until we pass this package and give assistance to these people again.

Today we have the opportunity to expend for 13 weeks unemployed benefits. The President has asked for a stand-alone package. The Senate has passed it. Laid-off workers deserve it. Let us give them a helping hand. Let us vote against this rule. Promises made, promises broken. The American people are watching and the clock is ticking.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Rules.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding me time.

I am very impressed with the letter that my colleague, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE), just placed before us. And I would commend it to my colleagues. He is absolutely right. The President said that by the end of the year he did want a package that would address the unemployment issue. But notice the next line in there. The President also insisted on having a health benefits package.

Guess what? The measure we are going to be voting on right here will help meet the demand that the President has put forward. It seems to me that we need to realize that if we were to wait on the other body for every action that we have taken, we would not have passed Trade Promotion Authority. We would not have passed an energy bill to help us attain domestic energy self-sufficiency. We would not have passed the faith-based legislation. We would not, as I was reminded last night, have passed the very important bipartisan election reform measure that came out of this institution.

It seems to me that we need to realize that the important thing for us to do right now is to focus not only on this very important issue of providing benefits to those who are suffering, those who are hurting, unemployment benefits and health benefits; but also we need to focus on what it is that will address this issue. And that is what the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) and the members of his committee have done, and that is job creation and economic growth.

We know full well that the President wants that because he understands that the only way that you are going to effectively deal with those who are hurting today is to create an opportunity for a job for them. And so tying the two together is something that is absolutely essential if we are going to address this in a long-run way. So I urge my colleagues to vote for this rule

and vote for the package that will allow us to provide unemployment benefits and health benefits for the American people along with the very important job-creation vehicle necessary.

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Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I would inquire about the time remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) has 8½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) has 12½ minutes remaining.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, last night the Republican leadership here in the House kept us until almost 3:00 in the morning in order to try to kill campaign finance reform, and this morning, a few hours later, they offer us this bill—proof positive of how desperate our Nation is for approval of campaign finance reform.

Today, of course, is Valentine's Day, but here in the House almost every day is Valentine's Day for special interest allies of this Republican leadership. They live and die by the motto, "friends help friends get tax breaks whenever they can."

Indeed, before the dust had settled over Ground Zero on September 11, within hours, the same folks that are promoting this bill were wrapping their old tax-break rhetoric in red, white and blue and claiming it was necessary in the war on terrorism.

Only a few days later they were working to repeal the alternative minimum tax to ensure that the appeal of President Bush for sacrifice in this Nation would be met by our largest corporations being willing to sacrifice by accepting a tax rebate check. Who do my colleagues suppose was leading that effort in the special interests? None other than Enron.

Cannot my colleagues imagine that call to Houston, "Kenny Boy, can you accept a mere \$254 million of taxes that Enron paid and could not avoid over the last 14 years as your share of sacrifice?" Is that enough sacrifice for Enron? And this morning, the same folks that were doing that, after a little public scrutiny of their proposed \$254 million gift for Enron, decided they could not repeal it. So they determined instead to repeal all the elements of the same tax, and they are willing to hold the unemployed workers of America, including unemployed workers at Enron, hostage so that Ken Lay, who still has six or seven houses to live in, and his company and other companies can share the sacrifice demanded in these difficult times by paying no taxes at all.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER).

(Mr. WELLER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)